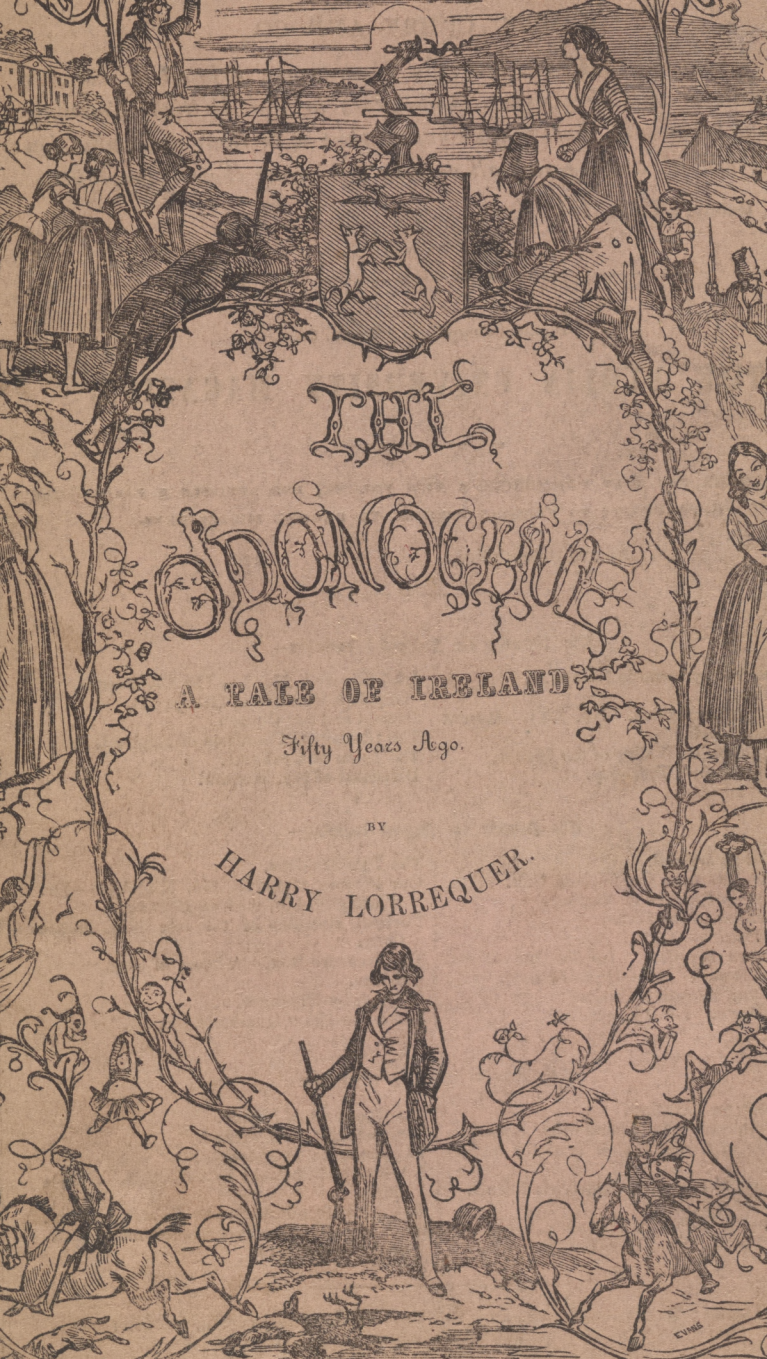

THE O'DONOGHUE

A TALE OF IRELAND

Fifty Years Ago.

BY

HARRY LORREQUER.

TO PIRATES IN THE BRITISH COLONIES.

MESSRS. CURRY AND CO.,

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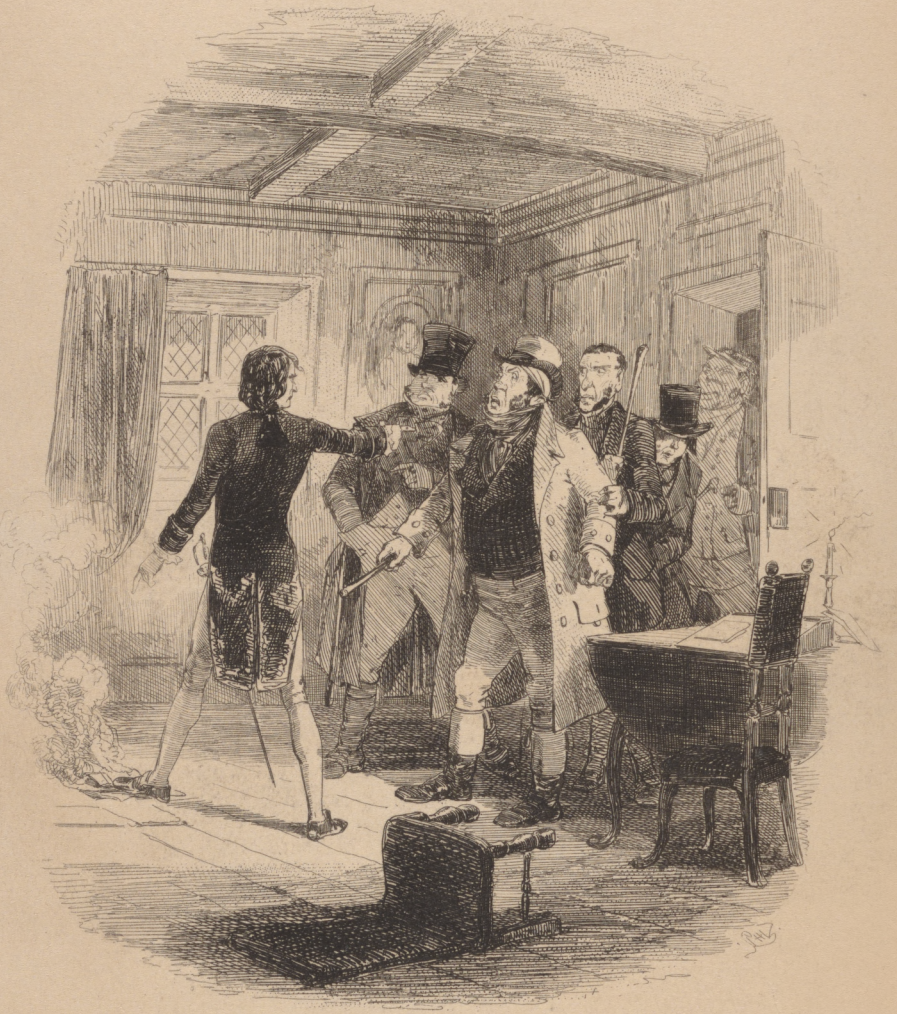

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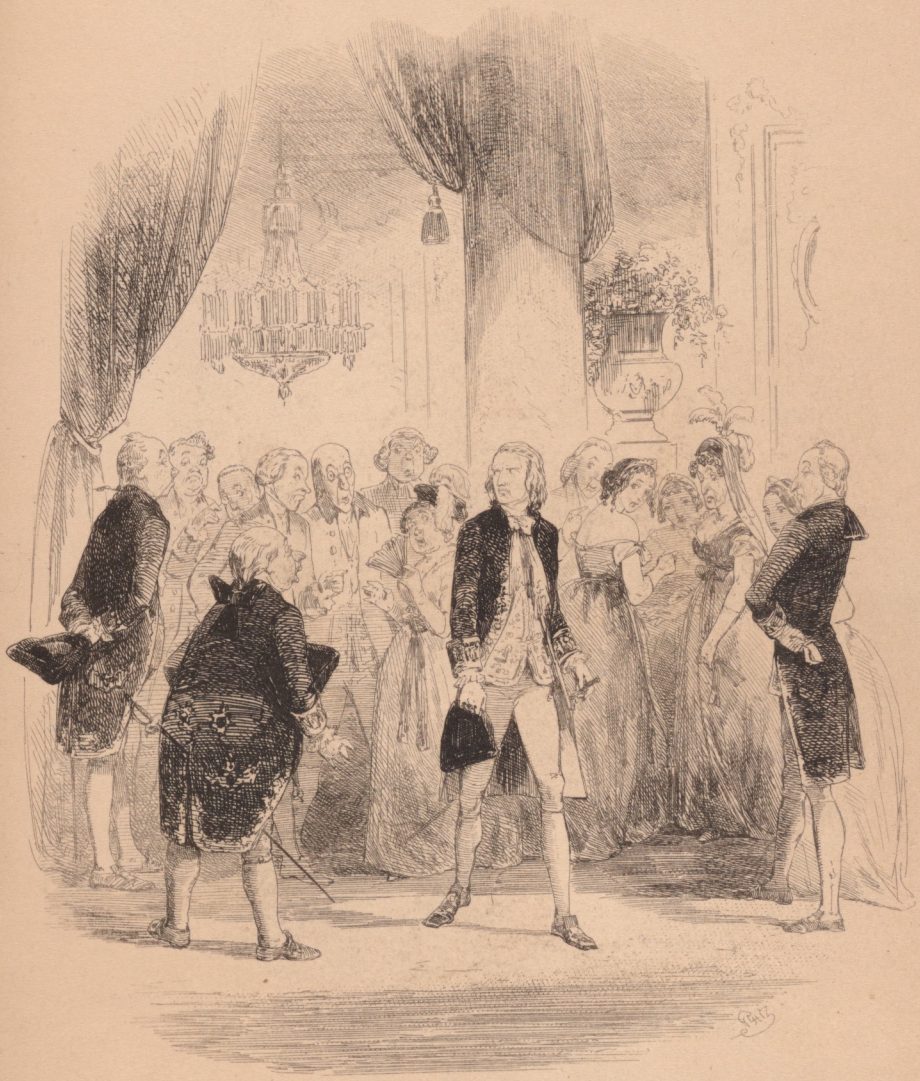

Mark's exit from the Ball.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"A PRESAGE OF DANGER."

When the long-wished-for evening drew nigh, in which Talbot had pledged himself to reveal to Mark the circumstances of their enterprise, and to make him known to those concerned in the plot, his manner became flurried and excited;—he answered, when spoken to, with signs of impatience, and seemed so engrossed by his own thoughts, as to be unable to divert his attention from them. Mark, in general the reverse of a shrewd observer, perceived this, and attributing it to the heavy losses he had latterly incurred at play, forebore in any way to notice the circumstance, and from his silence Talbot became probably more indifferent to appearances, and placed less restraint on his conduct. He drank, too, more freely than was his wont, and appeared like one desirous by any means to rid himself of some unwelcome reflections.

"It is almost time to dress, Mark," said he, with an effort to seem easy and unconcerned. "Let us have another flask of Burgundy before we go."

"I'll have no more wine, nor you, if you will be advised by me, either," said Mark, gravely.

"Ha! then you would imply I have drank too much already, Mark? Not far wrong there, perhaps, and under ordinary circumstances such would be the case; but there are times when the mind, like the body, demands double nourishment, and with me wine strengthens, never confuses thought. Do you know, Mark, that I have a presentiment of some evil before me;—whence, and in what shape it is to come, I cannot tell you; but I feel it as certain as if it had been revealed to me."

"You are despondent about our prospects," said Mark, gloomily.

Talbot made no answer, but leaned his head on the chimney-piece, and seemed buried in deep thought;—then recovering himself, he said, in a low, but distinct accent—

"Did you take notice of a fellow at the tennis-court the other day, who stood beside me all the time I was settling with the marker? Oh! I forgot—you were not there. Well, there was such a one—a flashy-looking, vulgar fellow, with that cast of countenance that betokens

shrewdness and cunning. I met him yesterday in the Park, and this evening, as I came to dinner, I saw him talking to the landlord's nephew, in the hall."

"Well, and what of all that? If any one should keep account of where and how often he had seen either of us, this week past, might he not conjure up suspicions fully as strong as your's? Let us begin to take fright at shadows, and we shall make but a sorry hand of it, when real dangers approach us."

"The shadows are the warnings, Mark, and the wise man never neglects a warning."

"He who sees thunder in every dark cloud above him, is but the fool of his own fears," said Mark, rudely, and walked towards the window. "Is that anything like your friend, Talbot?" added he, as he beheld the dark outline of a figure, which seemed standing, intently looking up at the window.

"The very fellow!" cried Talbot; for at the moment a passing gleam of light fell upon the figure, and marked it out distinctly.

"There is something about him I can half recognize myself," said Mark; "but he is so muffled up with great-coat and cravat, I cannot clearly distinguish him."

"Indeed! Do, for heaven's sake, think of where you saw him, and when, Mark; for I own my anxiety about him is more than common."

"I'll soon find out for you," said Mark, suddenly seizing his hat;—but at the same instant the door opened, and a waiter appeared.

"There's a gentleman below stairs, Mr. Talbot, would be glad to speak a few words with you."

Talbot motioned, by an almost imperceptible gesture, that Mark should retire into the adjoining room; and then, approaching the waiter, asked, in a low cautious voice, if the stranger were known to him.

"No, sir—never saw him before. He seems like one from the country: Mr. Crossley says he's from the south."

"Show him up," said Talbot, hurriedly; and, as the waiter left the room, he seated himself in his chair, in an attitude of well-assumed carelessness and ease. This was scarcely done, when the stranger entered, and closed the door behind him.

"Good evening to you, Mr. Talbot. I hope I see your honor well," said he, in an accent of very unmistakable Kerry Doric.

"Good evening to you, friend," replied Talbot. "My memory is not so good as yours, or I'd call you by your name also."

"I'm Lanty Lawler, sir—that man that sold your honor the dark

chesnut mare down in the county Kerry, last winter. I was always wishing to see your honor again, by reason of that same.

"How so?" said Talbot, getting suddenly paler, but with no other appearance of emotion in his manner. "Was not our contract honestly concluded at the time?"

"It was, sir—there's no doubt of it. Your honor paid like a gentleman, and in goold besides;—but that's just the business I come about here. It was French money you gave me, and I got into trouble about it—some saying that I was a spy, and others making out that I was, maybe, worse; and so I thought I wouldn't pass any more of it, till I seen yourself, and maybe you'd change it for me."

While he was speaking, Talbot's eye never wandered from him—not fixed, indeed, with any seeming scrutiny, but still intently watching every play of his features.

"You told me at the time, however, that French gold was just as convenient to you as English," said he, smiling good-humouredly, "and from the company I met you in, I found no difficulty in believing you."

"The times is changed, sir," said Lanty, sighing. "God help us—we must do the best we can."

This evasive answer seemed perfectly to satisfy Talbot, who assented with a shake of the head, as he said—

"Very well, Lanty; if you will come here to-morrow, I'll exchange your gold for you."

"Thank your honor kindly," said Lanty, with a bow; but still making no sign of leaving the room, where he stood, changing from one foot to the other, in an attitude of bashful diffidence. "There was another little matter, sir, but I'd be sorry to trouble you about it—and sure you couldn't help it, besides."

"And that is——Let us hear it, Lanty."

"Why, sir, it's the horse—the mare with the one white fetlock. They say, sir, that she was left at Moran's stables by the man that robbed Mr. Moore of Moore-croft. Deaf Collison, the post-boy, can swear to her; and as I bought her myself at Dycer's, they are calling me to account for when I sold her, and to whom."

"Why, there's no end to your trouble about that unlucky beast, Lanty," said Talbot, laughing; "and I confess it's rather hard, that you are not only expected to warrant your horse sound, but must give a guarantee that the rider is honest."

"Devil a lie in it, but that's just it," said Lanty, who laughed heartily at the notion.

"Well, we must look to this for you, Lanty; for although I have no desire to have my name brought forward, still you must not suffer on that account. I remember paying my bill at Rathmallow with that same mare. She made an overreach coming down a hill, and became dead lame with me; and I gave her to the landlord of the little inn in the square, in lieu of my score."

"See now, what liars there's in the world!" said Lanty, holding up his hands in pious horror. "Ould Finn of the Head Inn tould me she ate a feed of oats at the door, and started again for Askeaton, with a gentleman just like your honor, the night after I sold her. He knew the mare well; and by the same token he said she was galled on the shoulder with holsters that was fixed to the saddle. Now, think of that, and he after buying her! Is it early in the morning I'm to come to your honor?" said he, moving towards the door.

"Yes—that is—no, Lanty, no—about twelve o'clock. I'm a late riser. Wait a moment, Lanty; I have something more to say to you, if I could only remember it." He passed his hand across his brow as he spoke, and looked like one labouring to recall some lost thought. "No matter," said he, after a pause of some minutes; "I shall perhaps recollect it before to-morrow."

"Good night to you, then, sir," said Lanty, with a most obsequious bow, as he opened the door.

Their eyes met: it was only for a moment; but with such intelligence did each glance read the other, that they both smiled significantly. Talbot moved quickly forward at the instant, and closing the door with one hand, he laid the other gently on Lanty's shoulder.

"Come, Lanty," said he, jocularly, "I can afford to sport ten pounds for a whim. Tell me who it was sent you after me this evening, and I'll give you the money."

"Done, then!" cried Lanty, grasping his hand; "And you'll ask no more than his name?"

"Nothing more. I pledge my word; and here's the money."

"Captain Hemsworth, the agent to the rich Englishman in Glenflesk."

"I don't think I ever saw him in my life—I'm certain I don't know him. Is he a tall, dark man?"

"I'll tell you no more," said Lanty. "The devil a luck I ever knew come of speaking of him."

"All fair, Lanty—a bargain's a bargain; and so, good-night." And with a shake-hands of affected cordiality, they parted.

"Your conference has been a long one," said Mark, who waited with impatience, until the silence without permitted him to come forth.

"Not so long as I could have wished it," was Talbot's reply, as he stood in deep thought over what had passed. "It is just as I feared, Mark; there is danger brewing for me in some quarter, but how, and in what shape, I cannot even guess. This same horsedealer, this Lanty Lawler——"

"Lanty Lawler, did you say?"

"Yes. You know him, then?"

"To be sure I do. We've had many dealings together. He's a shrewd fellow, and not over-scrupulous in the way of his trade; but, apart from that, he's a true-hearted, honest fellow, and a friend to the cause."

"You think so, Mark," said Talbot, with a smile of significant meaning.

"I know it, Talbot. He is not an acquaintance of yesterday with me. I have known him for years long. He is as deep in the plot as any, and perhaps has run greater risks than either of us."

"Well, well," said Talbot, sighing, as though either weary of the theme, or disinclined to contradict the opinion;" let us think of other matters. Shall we go to this ball or not? I incline to say nay."

"What! Not go there?" said Mark, starting back in astonishment. Why, what in heaven's name have we been waiting for, but this very opportunity?—and what reason is there now to turn from our plans?"

"There may be good and sufficient ones, even though they should be purely personal to myself," said Talbot, in a tone of ill-dissembled pique. "But come; we will go. I have been walking over a mine too long to care for a mere petard. And now, let us lose no more time, but dress at once."

"Must I really wear this absurd dress, Talbot? For very shame's sake, I shall not be able to look about me."

"That you must, Mark. Remember that your safety lies in the fact that we attract no notice of any kind. To be as little remarked as possible is our object; and for this reason I shall wear the uniform of an English militia regiment, of which there are many at every Levee. We shall separate on entering the room, and meet only from time to time; but as we go along, I'll give you all your instructions. And now to dress, as quickly as may be.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"THE ST. PATRICK'S BALL."

MUCH as O'Donoghue marvelled at the change effected in his own appearance by the court dress, he was still more surprised at finding what a complete transformation his friend Talbot had undergone. The scarlet uniform seemed to make him appear larger and fatter; while the assumption of a pair of dark whiskers added several years to his apparent age, and totally changed the character of his countenance.

"I see by your face, Mark," said he, laughing, "that the disguise is complete. You could scarcely recognise me—I may safely defy most others?"

"But you are taller, I think?"

"About an inch and a-half only—false heels inside my boots give me a slight advantage over you. Don't be jealous, however, I'm not your match on a fair footing."

This flattery seemed successful, for Mark smiled, and reddened slightly. As they drove along, Talbot entered minutely into an account of the people they should meet with—warning Mark of the necessity there existed to avoid any, even the most trivial, sign of astonishment at anything he saw—to mix with the crowd, and follow the current from room to room, carefully guarding against making any chance acquaintance—and, above all, not to be recognised by his cousin Kate, if by any accident he should be near her.

In the midst of these directions, Talbot was interrupted by the sudden stoppage of the carriages in the line, which already extended above a mile from the Castle gate.

"Here we are at last, Mark, in the train of the courtiers—does your patriotism burn for the time when your homage shall be rendered to a native Sovereign. Ha! there goes one of the privileged class—that carriage, with the two footmen, is the Lord Chancellor's, he has the right of the private 'entrée,' and takes the lead of such humble folk as we are mixed up with."

A deep groan from the mob burst forth, as the equipage, thus noticed, dashed forward. Such manifestations of public feeling were then

frequent, and not always limited to mere expressions of dislike. The very circumstance of quitting the regular line, and passing the rest, seemed to evoke popular indignation, and it was wonderful with what readiness the mob caught up allusions to the public or private life of those, thus momentarily exposed to their indignation. Some speech or vote in Parliament—some judicial sentence—or some act or event in their private history, was at once recalled and criticised, in a manner far more frank than flattering. None escaped this notice, for, notwithstanding the strong force of mounted police that kept the street clear, some adventurous spirit was always ready to rush forward to the carriage window, and in a moment announce to the others the name of its occupant. By all this, Mark was greatly amused—he had few sympathies with those in little favour with the multitude, and could afford to laugh at the sallies which assailed the members of the Government. The taunting sarcasms and personal allusions, of which the Irish members were not sparing in the house, were here repeated by those, who suffered the severity to lose little of its sting in their own version.

"Look at Flood, boys—there's the old vulture with broken beak and cadaverous aspect—a groan for Flood," and the demand was answered by thousands.

"There's Tom Connolly," shouted a loud voice, "three cheers for the Volunteers—three cheers for Castletown."

"Thank you, boys, thank you," said a rich mellow voice, as in their enthusiasm the mob pressed around the carriage of the popular member, and even shook hands with the footmen behind the carriage.

"Here's Luttrel, here's Luttrel," cried out several together, and in a moment the excitement, which before was all of joy, assumed a character of deepest execration.

Aware of the popular feeling towards him, this gentleman's carriage was guarded by two troopers of the horse police—nor was the precaution needless, for no sooner was he recognised, than a general rush was made by the mob, and for a moment or two the carriage was separated from the rest of the line.

"Groan him, boys, groan him, but don't touch the traitor," shouted a savage-looking fellow, who stood a head and shoulders above the crowd.

"Couldn't you afford to buy new liveries with the eighty thousand pounds the Government gave you," yelled another, and the sally was responded to with a burst of savage laughter.

"Throw us out a penny," called a third, "it will treat all your friends in Ireland—let him go, boys, let him go on, he's only stopping the way of his betters."

"Here's the man that knows how to spend his money—three cheers for the Englishman from Stephen's-green—three cheers for Sir Marmaduke Travers," and the cheers burst forth with an enthusiasm that showed, how much more a character for benevolence and personal kindness conciliated mob estimation, than all the attributes of political partizanship.

"Bring us a lamp here, bring us a lamp," cried a miserable object in tattered rags, "take down a lamp, boys, till we have a look at the two beauties," and strange as the suggestion may seem, it was hailed with a cry of triumphal delight, and in another moment a street lamp was taken from its place and handed over the heads of the mob, to the very window of Sir Marmaduke's carriage; while the old Baronet, kindly humouring the eccentricity of the people, lowered the glass to permit them to see in. A respectful silence extended over that crowd, motley and miserable as it was, and they stood in mute admiration, not venturing upon a word nor a remark, until as it were overcome by a spontaneous feeling of enthusiasm they broke forth into one loud cheer that echoed from the College to the very gates of the Castle; and with blessings deep and fervent, as they would have bestowed for some real favour, the carriage was allowed to proceed on its way once more.

"Here's Morris, here's the Colonel," was now the cry, and a burst of as merry laughter as ever issued from happy hearts, welcomed the new arrival; "make him get out, boys, make him get out, and show us his legs, that's the fellow ran away in Flanders," and before the mirth had subsided, the unhappy Colonel had passed on.

"Who's this in the hackney-coach?" said one, as the carriage in which Talbot and Mark were seated came up. The window was let down in a moment, and Talbot, leaning his head out, whispered a few words in a low voice; whatever their import, their effect was magical, and a hurra, as wild as the war-cry of an Indian, shook the street.

"What was it you said?" cried Mark.

"Three words in Irish," said Talbot, laughing; "they are the only three in my vocabulary, and their meaning is 'wait awhile;' and somehow, it would seem a very significant intimation to Irishmen."

The carriage moved on, and the two friends soon alighted in the brilliantly-illuminated vestibule, now lined with battleaxe-guards, and resounding with the clangor of a brass band. Mixing with the crowd that poured up the staircase, they passed into the first drawing-room, without stopping to write their names, as was done by the others, Talbot telling Mark, in a whisper, to move up and follow him closely.

The distressing impression, that he himself would be an object of

notice and remark to others, and which had up to that very moment tortured him, gave way at once, as he found himself in that splendid assemblage, where beauty, in all the glare of dress and jewels, abounded, and where, for the first time, the world of fashion and elegance burst upon his astonished senses. The courage that, with dauntless nerve, would have led him to the cannon's mouth, now actually faltered, and made him feel faint-hearted, to find himself mixing with those among whom he had no right to be present. Talbot's shrewd intelligence seemed to divine what was passing in Mark's mind, for he took him by the arm, and as he led him forward, whispered, from time to time, certain particulars of the company, intended to satisfy him, that, however distinguished by rank and personal appearance, in reality, their characters had little claim to his respect. With such success did he demolish reputations—so fatally did his sarcasms depreciate those against whom they were directed—that, ere long, Mark moved along in utter contempt for that gorgeous throng, which at first had impressed him so profoundly. To hear that the proud-looking general, his coat a blaze of orders, was a coward; that the benign and mild-faced judge was a merciless, unrelenting tyrant; that the bishop, whose simple bearing and gentle quietude of manner were most winning, was in reality a crafty place-hunter and a subtle "intrigant"—such were the lessons Talbot poured into his ear, while amid the ranks of beauty still more deadly calumnies pointed all he said.

"Society is rotten to the very core here, Mark," said he, bitterly. "There never was a land nor an age when profligacy stood so high in the market. It remains to be seen if our friends will do better—for a time, at least, they are almost certain to do so; but now, that I have shown you something of the company, let us separate, lest we be remarked. This pillar can always be our rallying spot. Whenever you want me, come here;" and so saying, and with a slight pressure of his hand, Talbot mixed with the crowd, and soon was lost to Mark's view.

Talbot's revelations served at first to impair the pleasure Mark experienced in the brilliant scene around him; but when once more alone, the magnetic influence of a splendour so new, and of beauty so dazzling, appealed to his heart far more powerfully than the cold sarcasms of his companion. Glances which, directed to others, he caught in passing, and felt with a throb of ecstasy within his own bosom; bright eyes, that beamed not for him, sent a glow of delight through his frame. The atmosphere of pleasure which he had never breathed before, now warmed the current of his blood, and his pulse beat high

and madly. All the bitter thoughts he had harboured against his country's enemies could not stand before his admiration of that gorgeous assemblage, and he felt ashamed to think that he, and such as he, should conspire the downfall of a system, whose very externals were so captivating. He wandered thus from room to room in a dream of pleasure—now stopping to gaze at the dancers, then moving towards some of the refreshment-rooms, where parties were seated in familiar circles, all in the full enjoyment of the brilliant festivity. Like a child roaming at will through some beauteous garden, heightening enjoyment by the rapid variety of new pleasures, and making in the quick transition of sensations a source of more fervid delight, so did he pass from place to place, and in this way time stole by, and he utterly forgot the rendezvous he had arranged with Talbot. At last, suddenly remembering this, he endeavoured to find out the place, and in doing so was forced to pass through a card-room, where several parties were now at play. Around one of the tables a greater crowd than usual was assembled. There, as he passed, Mark thought he overheard Talbot's voice. He stopped and drew near, and, with some little difficulty, making his way through, perceived his friend seated at the table, deeply engaged in what, if he were to judge from the heap of gold before him, seemed very high play. His antagonist was an old, fine-looking man, in the uniform of a general officer; but while Mark looked, he arose, and his place was taken by another—the etiquette being, that the winner should remain until he ceased to win.

"He has passed eleven times," said a gentleman to his friend, in Mark's hearing; "he must at least have won four hundred pounds."

"Do you happen to know who he is?"

"No; nor do I know any one that does. There!—see!—he has won again."

"He's a devilish cool player—that's certain. I never saw a man more collected."

"He studies his adversary far more than his cards—I remark that."

"Oh! here's old Clangoff come to try his luck:" and an opening of the crowd was now made to permit a tall and very old man to approach the table. Very much stooped in the shoulders, and with snow-white hair, Lord Clangoff still preserved the remains of one who in his youth had been the handsomest man of his day. Although simply dressed in the Windsor uniform, the brilliant rings he wore upon his fingers, and the splendour of a gold snuff-box surrounded by enormous diamonds, evinced the taste for magnificence for which he was celebrated. There

was an air of dignity with which he took his seat, saluting the acquaintances he recognised about him, very strikingly in contrast with the familiar manners then growing into vogue, while in the courteous urbanity of his bow to Talbot, his whole breeding was revealed.

"It is a proud thing even to encounter such an adversary, sir," said he, smiling. "They have just told me that you have vanquished our best players."

"The caprice of Fortune, my lord, that so often favours the undeserving," said Talbot, with a gesture of extreme humility.

"Your success should be small at play, if the French adage have any truth in it," said his lordship, alluding to Talbot's handsome features, which seemed to indicate favour with the softer sex.

"According to that theory, my lord, I have the advantage over you at present."

This adroit flattery of the other's earlier reputation as a gallant, seemed to please him highly; for, as he presented his box to one of his friends near, he whispered—"A very well-bred fellow, indeed." Then turning to Talbot, said, "Do you like a high stake?"

"I am completely at your service, my lord—whatever you please."

"Shall we say fifty?—or do you prefer a hundred?"

"If the same to you, I like the latter just twice as well."

The old lord smiled at having found an adversary similarly disposed with himself, and drew out his pocket-book with an air of palpable satisfaction; while in the looks of increased interest among the bystanders could be seen the anxiety they felt in the coming struggle.

"You have the deal, my lord," said Talbot, presenting the cards. "Still, if any gentleman cares for another fifty on the game——"

"I'll take it, sir," said a voice from behind Lord Clangoff's chair, and Mark, struck by the accent, fixed his eyes on the speaker. The blood rushed to his face at once, for it was Hemsworth who stood before him—the ancient enemy of his house—the tyrant, whose petty oppressions and studied insults had been a theme he was familiar with from boyhood. All fear of his being recognised himself was merged in the savage pleasure he felt in staring fixedly at the man he hated.

He would have given much to be able to whisper the name into Talbot's ear; but remembering how such an attempt might be attended by a discovery of himself, he desisted, and with a throbbing heart awaited the result of the game. Meanwhile Hemsworth, whose whole attention was concentrated on Talbot, never turned his eyes towards any other quarter. The moment seemed favourable for Mark, and gently retiring through the crowd, he at last disengaged himself, and sat down

on a bench near a door-way. His mind was full of its own teeming thoughts, thoughts that the hated presence of his enemy sent madly thronging upon him; he lost all memory of where he was, nor did he remark that two persons had entered, and seated themselves near him, when a word, a single word, fell upon his ear. He turned round, and saw his cousin Kate sitting beside Frederick Travers. The start of surprise he could not restrain attracted her notice. She turned also, and as a deadly pallor came over her features, she uttered the one word, "Mark." Travers immediately caught the name, and, leaning forward, the two young men's eyes met, and for some seconds never wandered from each other.

"I should have gone to see you, cousin Kate," said Mark, after a momentary struggle to seem calm and collected, "but I feared—that is, I did not know ——"

"But, Mark, dear Mark, why are you here?" said she, in a tone of heartfelt terror. "Do you know that none save those presented at the Levees, and known to the Lord Lieutenant, dare to attend these balls?"

"I came with a friend," said Mark, in a voice where anger and self-reproach were mingled. "If he misled me, he must answer for it."

"It was imprudent, Mr. O'Donoghue, and that's all," said Travers, in a tone of great gentleness; "and your friend should not have misled you. I'll take care that nothing unpleasant shall arise in consequence. Just remain here for a moment."

"Stay, sir," said Mark, as Travers arose from his seat; "I hate accepting favours, even should they release me from a position as awkward as this is. Here comes my friend, Talbot, and he'll perhaps explain what I cannot."

"I have lost my money, Mark," said Talbot, coming forward, and perceiving with much anxiety that his young friend was engaged in a conversation. "Let us move about and see the dancers."

"Wait a few seconds first," said Mark, sternly, "and satisfy this gentleman that I am not in fault in coming here, save so far as being induced by you to do so."

"May I ask how the gentleman feels called on to require the explanation?" said Talbot, proudly.

"I wish him to know the circumstances," said Mark.

"And I," said Travers, interrupting, "might claim a right to ask it, as first aide-de-camp to his Excellency."

"So, then," whispered Talbot, with a smile, "it is the mere impertinence of office."

Travers' face flushed up, and his lips quivered, as in an equally low tone of voice he said—

"Where and when, sir, will you dare to repeat these words?"

"To-morrow morning, at seven o'clock, on the strand below Clontarf, and in this gentleman's presence," said Talbot into his ear.

A nod from Travers completed the arrangement, and Talbot, placing his arm hurriedly within Mark's, said—

"Let us get away from this, Mark. It is all settled. We meet to-morrow."

Mark turned one look towards Kate, who was just in the act of accepting Travers' arm to return to the ball-room. Their glances met for a second, but with how different a meaning!—in *hers*, a world of anxiety and interest—in *his*, the proud and scornful defiance of one who seemed to accept of no compromise with fortune.

"So, then, it is your friend Travers, Mark, with whom I am to have the honour of a rencontre! I'm sorry, for your sake, that it is so."

"And why so?" asked Mark, sternly; for in his present mood he was as little satisfied with Talbot as with Travers.

"Because if I don't mistake much, you will not have the opportunity of wiping out your old score with him. I'll shoot him, Mark!" These last words were uttered between his almost closed teeth, and in a tone of scarce restrained anger. "Are either of us looking very bloody-minded or savage, Mark, I wonder? for see how the people are staring and whispering as we pass!"

The observation was not made without reason, for already the two young men were regarded on all sides as they passed—the different persons in their way retiring as they approached.

"How do you do, my lord? I hope I see you well," said Talbot, bowing familiarly to a venerable old man who stood near, and who as promptly returned his salute.

"Who is it you bowed to?" said Mark, in a whisper.

"The Chief-Justice, Mark. Not that I know him, or he me; but at this critical moment such a recognition is a certificate of character, which will at least last long enough to see us down stairs. There, let me move on first, and follow me," and as he spoke, he edged his way through a crowded door, leaving Mark to follow how he could. This was, however a task of more difficulty than it seemed, for already a number of persons blocked up the doorway, eager to hear something which a gentleman was relating to those about him.

"I can only tell you," continued he, "that none seems to know either of them. As Clangoff has lost the diamond snuff-box the Empe-

ror of Austria presented him with—he missed it after leaving the card-table—the presumption is, that we are favoured with somewhat doubtful company."

"Carysford says," cried another, "that he knows one of them well, and has often seen him in Paris at the play-houses."

A low whisper ran around after these words, and at the instant every eye was directed to Mark O'Donoghue. The young man sustained their looks with a frown of resolute daring, turning from one to the other to see if, perchance, by any gesture or expression, he could single out one to pay the penalty for the rest—his blood boiled at the insulting glances that fell upon him, and he was in the very act of giving his temper vent, when an arm was slipped within his, and Frederick Travers whispered in his ear—

"I hope your friend has got safely away. There are some fellows here to-night of notoriously bad character, and Mr. Talbot may get into trouble on that account."

"He has just left this. I hope before now he has reached the street."

"Let me be your convoy, then," said Travers, good-naturedly. "These talking fools will cease their scandal when they see us together;" and, affecting an air of easy intimacy, he led Mark through the crowd, which even already bestowed very altered glances as they passed.

"Good night, sir," said Mark, abruptly, as they arrived at the room by which he remembered to have entered, "I see my friend yonder, awaiting me." Travers returned the greeting, and half extended his hand, but Mark coolly bowed and turned away. The moment after he was at Talbot's side.

"Thank heaven, we are breathing the free air again," he exclaimed, as they issued forth into the street, "a little longer would have suffocated me."

"It was with Travers you parted at the head of the stair?" said Talbot, inquiringly.

"Yes; he was polite enough to come up when you left me, and the company and myself have reason to be thankful to him, for assuredly, we were, both of us, forgetting our good manners, very much at the moment. They were pleased to look at me in a fashion of very questionable civility, and I, I greatly fear, was scarcely more polite. It would seem, Talbot, that some swindlers or pickpockets had introduced themselves at the assembly, and we had the honor of being confounded with them—so much for the prudence of our first step."

"Come, come, Mark, don't lose temper about trifles."

"Would it have proved a trifle, if I had thrown one of those gold-laced fops out of the window into the court? I promise you the temptation was devilish strong in me to act so, at one moment. But what have we gained by all this—where were the friends you should have met—whom have you seen—what have you learned?"

Talbot made no reply, but walked on in silence.

"Or have we exposed ourselves to the taunting insolence of these people, for the mock pleasure of mixing with them. Is that our gain here?"

Still Talbot made no reply, and Mark, as if his passion had expended itself, now became silent also, and in this wise they reached the hotel, each sunk in his own personal reflections.

"Now, Mark," said Talbot, when they had gained their room, "now let us set ourselves to think over what is to be done, and not waste a thought on what is bygone. At seven, to-morrow, I am to meet Travers; before nine I must be on the way to France, that is if he do not issue a leaden 'ne exeat' against me. I shall certainly fire at him—your pretty cousin will never forgive me for it, that I know well"—here he stole a side look at Mark, across whose features a flash of passion was thrown—"still, I am sorry this should have occurred, because I had many things to settle here; among others, some which more nearly concerned yourself."

"Me! concerned me," said Mark, in surprise.

"Yes; I am deeper in your secrets than you are aware of—deeper than you are yourself, perhaps. What would you say, Mark, if I could insure you the possession of your property and estate, as it was left to you by your grandfather, without debt or incumbrance of any kind, free from mortgage?"

"Free from Hemsworth," cried Mark, passionately.

"Even so—I was just coming to that."

"I know not what I should say, Talbot, but I know what I should do—throw every farthing of it into the scale where I have thrown life and hope—the cause of my country."

Talbot shook his head, doubtfully, for a second or two, then said: "It is not money is wanting to the enterprise, it is rather what no money can buy—the reckless courage of men willing to devote themselves to a cause which they must never hope to live to see successful, but whose graves must be the ramparts over which others will achieve liberty. No, my hopes for you point otherwise. I wish to see you as the head and representative of an ancient name and house, with the influ-

ence property and position would confer, taking your place in the movement, not as a soldier of fortune, but as a man of rank and weight." Talbot paused for a moment to enjoy, as it were, the delight this brilliant picture of coming greatness produced upon the youth, and then went on, "such a place I can offer you, Mark."

"How, and on what terms?" cried Mark, bursting with impatience.

"I make no conditions—I am your friend, and ask nothing but your friendship—a lucky chance has given me the opportunity to serve you—all I bargain for is, that you do not inquire further how that chance arose."

Mark stood in mute amazement, while Talbot, unlocking his writing desk, drew forth a dark leather pocket-book, tied with a string, and laid it leisurely on the table before him.

"There is a condition I will bargain for, Mark," said Talbot, after a pause—"although I'm sure it is a weakness, I scarcely ever thought to feel. We shall soon be separated, who knows when we shall meet again, if ever. Now, if men should speak of me in terms unworthy of one who has been your friend, laying to my charge acts of dishonour——"

"Who will dare to do so before me?" said Mark, indignantly.

"It will happen, nevertheless, Mark; and I ask not your defence of me when absent—as much as that you will yourself reject all belief in these calumnies. I have told you enough of my life to let you know in what circumstances of difficulty and danger different parts have been forced upon me, and it may be that, while I have personated others, they in revenge have masqueraded under my name. This is no mere suspicion. I know it has already happened; bear it well in mind, and when your friend Henry Talbot is assailed, remember the explanation and your own promise."

Mark grasped Talbot's hand firmly, and shook it with the warmth of true friendship.

'Sit down beside me, Mark," said he, placing the chairs at the table, "and read this."

With these words, he unfastened the string of the pocket-book, and took forth a small paper from an envelope, of which the seal was already broken.

"This is addressed to your father, Mark," said he, showing him the superscription.

"I know that hand-writing," said Mark, gazing fixedly at it; "that is Father Rourke's."

"Yes, that's the name," said Talbot, opening the letter. "Read this," and he handed the paper to Mark, while he himself read aloud—

"Mark O'Donoghue, son of Miles O'Donoghue, and Mary his wife, born 25th December, 1774, and christened on the morning of the 27th December, same year, by me Nicholas Rourke, P.P., Ballyvourney and Glengariff. Witnessed by us, Simon Gaffney, steward, and Sam. Wylie, butler."

"And what of all that," said Mark, with a voice of evident disappointment. "Do you think I wanted this certificate of birth or baptism to claim my name or my kindred?"

"No, but to claim your estate and fortune," said Talbot, hurriedly. "Do you not perceive the date of this document—1774—and that you only attained your majority on last Christmas day——"

"That cannot be," interrupted Mark. "I joined my father in a loan upon the estate two years ago; the sale to Hemsworth was made at the same time, and I must have been of age to do so."

"That does not follow," said Talbot, smiling. "It suited the objects of others to make you think so; but you were little more than nineteen at the time. Here's the certificate of your mother's marriage, and the date is February, 1773."

Mark's countenance became perfectly bloodless, his lips grew livid, while his nostrils were alternately distended and contracted violently, as he breathed with a heaving effort.

"You have your choice, therefore," said Talbot, flippantly, "to believe your father, a man of honour, or your mother——"

"Stop," cried Mark, as he seized his arm and shook it in his strong grasp; "speak the word, and, by Heaven, you'll never leave this spot alive."

Talbot seemed to feel no anger at this savage threat, but calmly said—

"It was not my wish to hurt your feelings, Mark. Very little reflection on your part might convince you, that I can have no object to serve here, save my regard for you. You seemed to doubt what I said about your age, and I wished to satisfy you at once that I was correct. You were not of age till last December. A false certificate of birth and baptism enabled your father to raise a considerable sum of money with your concurrence, and also permitted him to make a sale to Hemsworth of a property strictly entailed on you and yours. Both these acts were illegal and unjust. If Hemsworth be the rightful owner of that estate,

your birth is illegitimate—nay, nay—I am but putting the alternative, which you cannot, dare not accept. You must hear me with temper, Mark—calmly and patiently. It is a sad lesson when one must learn to think disparagingly of those they have ever looked up to and revered. But remember, that when your father did this act, he was surrounded with difficulties on every hand. There seemed no escape from the dangers around him; inevitable ruin was his lot: he doubtless intended to apply a considerable portion of this money to the repair of his shattered fortunes—of his affection for you there can be no question——"

"There, there," said Mark, interrupting him rudely; "there is no need to defend a father to his son. Tell me, rather, why you have revealed this secret to me at all, and to what end have you added this to the other calamities of my fortune?"

He stood up as he said these words, and paced the room with slow steps, his head sunk upon his bosom, and his arms dropped listlessly at his side. Talbot looked upon the figure, marked with every trait of despondency, and for some moments he seemed really to sorrow over the part he had taken; then rallying with his accustomed energy, he said—

"If I had thought, Mark, that you had neither ambition for yourself, nor hatred for an enemy, I would never have told you these things. I did fancy, however, that you were one who struggled indignantly against an inglorious fortune, and, still more, believed that you were not of a race to repay injury with forgetfulness. Hemsworth, you have often told me, has been the insulting enemy of your family. Not content with despoiling you of fortune, he has done his utmost to rob you of fair fame—to reduce an honoured house to the ignoble condition of peasants, and to break down the high and haughty spirit of a noble family by the humiliating ills of poverty. If you can forgive his injuries, can you forget his insults and his taunts?"

"Would you have me repay either by arraigning my father as a criminal?"

"Not so, Mark; many other courses are open to you. The knowledge of this fact by you, places you in a position to make your own terms with Hemsworth. He who has spent thirty thousand pounds on a purchase without a title, must needs yield to any conditions you think fit to impose—you have but to threaten——"

"That I will expose my father in a court of justice," said Mark, between his teeth; "that I will put money in one scale, and the honour of my house in the other; that I will truck the name and credit of my race, against the acres that were theirs. No, no; you mistake me

much; you know little of the kind of vengeance my heart yearns for, or you would never have tempted me with such a bait as this."

"Be it so," said Talbot, coolly; "Hemsworth is only the luckier man that has met such a temperament as yours to deal with; a vulgar spirit like mine would have turned the tables upon him. But I have done; keep the paper, Mark, there might come a time when it should prove useful to you. Hark!—what's that noise below? Don't you hear that fellow Lawler's voice in the court-yard?"—and as he spoke, the voice of the host, Billy Crossley, raised very high above its usual pitch, called out—

"I tell you, gentlemen, Mr. Talbot is not in the house; he dined out to-day, and has not returned since dinner."

A confused murmur followed this announcement; and again Crossley said, but in a still louder tone—

"You have perfect liberty to look for him wherever you please; don't say that I gave you any impediment or hindrance; follow me—I'll show you the way."

Talbot knew in a moment the intention of the speaker, and recognized in Crossley's vehemence an urgent warning to himself.

"I'm tracked, Mark," cried he; "there, take that key—burn the papers in that desk—all of them. At seven to-morrow, meet me on the strand; if all be safe, I'll be true to time; if not——"

The remainder of his sentence was cut short by the hurrying sounds of feet upon the stairs, and Crossley's voice, which in its loudest key continued to protest that Talbot was not in the house, nor had he seen him since dinner.

Mark hastily unlocked the desk and took out the papers, but when he turned round, Talbot was gone; a tremulous motion of the tapestry on the wall seemed to indicate that his escape had been made through some secret door behind it. He had no time, however, to think further of the circumstance, for scarcely had he applied the lighted candle to the papers, when the door was burst violently open, and three strange men, followed by Lanty Lawler, entered the room, while Crossley, whom they had pushed roughly aside, stood without, on the lobby, still talking as loudly as before.

"Is that him?" said one of the fellows, who seemed like a constable in plain clothes.

"No," whispered Lanty, as he skulked behind the shoulder of the speaker; "that's another gentleman."

"Were you alone in this apartment?" said the same man who spoke first, as he addressed Mark in the tone of authority.

"It is rather for me to ask what business you have to come here?"

replied Mark, as he continued to feed the flames with the letters and papers before him.

"You shall see my warrant when you have answered my question. Meanwhile these may be of some consequence," said the other, as, approaching the hearth, he stooped down to seize the burning papers.

"They do not concern you," said Mark, as he placed his foot in the very middle of the blaze.

"Stand back, sir," cried the constable, half raising his arm to enforce the command.

"Lay but a finger on me," said Mark, scornfully, "and I'll dash your head against the wall."

The insolence of this threat might have been followed by ill consequences, had not Lanty sprung hastily forward, and, catching the constable by the arm, cried out—

"It is the O'Donoghue of Glenflesk, a young gentleman of rank and fortune."

"What do we care for his rank or fortune," said the other, passionately. "If he obstructs the King's warrant for the arrest of a traitor or a felon, I value him no more than the meanest beggar in the street. Those papers there, for all I know, might throw light on the whole plot."

"They are at your service now," said Mark, as, with a kick of his foot, he dashed the blackened embers from him, and sent them in floating fragments through the room.

Unwilling as he seemed to continue a contest in which his authority had met only defiance, the constable gave the order to his underlings to make a strict search of the apartment and the bed-room which opened into it, during which Mark seated himself carelessly in an arm-chair, and taking a newspaper from the table, affected to read it.

Lanty stood for a few seconds, irresolute what to do; then stealing softly behind Mark's chair, he muttered, in a broken voice—

"If I thought he was a friend of yours, Master Mark——But it's no matter—I know he's off. I heard the gallop of a beast on the stones since we came in. Well, well, I never expected to see you here."

Mark made no other reply to this speech than a steady frown, whose contemptuous expression Lanty cowered under, as he said once more—

"It wasn't my fault at all, if I was obliged to come with the constables. There's more charges nor mine against him, the chap with the black whiskers says——"

"It's quite clear," said the chief of the party, as he re-entered the room, "it's quite clear this man was here a few minutes since, and

equally so that you know of his place of concealment. I tell you plainly, sir, if you continue to refuse information concerning him, I'll take you as my prisoner. I have two warrants against him—one for highway robbery, the other for treason."

"Why the devil have you no informations sworn against him for murder?" said Mark, insolently, for the language of the bailiff had completely aroused his passion. "Whoever he is, you are looking for, seems to have a clear conscience."

"Master Mark knows nothing at all about him, I'll go bail to any amount."

"We don't want your bail, my good friend; we want the man who calls himself Harvey Middleton in Herts, Godfrey Middleton in Surrey, the Chevalier Duchatel in France, Harry Talbot in Ireland, but who is better known in the police sheet;" and here he opened a printed paper, and pointing to the words,—"full description of John Barrington, convicted at the Maidstone assizes, and sentenced to fifteen years transportation."

The smile of insolent incredulity with which Mark listened to these imputations on the honour of his friend, if it did not assuage the anger of the constable, served to satisfy him that he was at least no practised colleague in crime, and turning to Lanty, he talked to him in a low whisper for several minutes.

"I tell ye," said Lanty, eagerly, in reply to some remark of the other, "his worship will never forgive you if you arrest him; his time is not yet come, and you'll get little thanks for interfering where ye had no business."

Whether convinced by these arguments, or deterred from making Mark his prisoner, by the conscious illegality of the act, the man collected his party, and having given them his orders in a low voice, left the room, followed by the others.

A gesture from Mark arrested Lanty, as he was in the act of passing out. "A word with you Lanty," said he, firmly. "What is the information against Talbot?—what is he accused of?"

"Sure didn't you hear yourself," replied Lanty, in a simpering, mock bashful voice. "They say he's Barrington the robber, and faith, they've strong evidence that they're not far out. 'Tis about a horse I sold him that I came here. I didn't want to harm or hurt any body, and if I thought he was a friend of yours——"

"He is a friend of mine," said Mark, "and therefore these stories are but one tissue of falsehoods. Are you aware, Lanty"—and here as the youth spoke his voice became low and whispering—"are you aware

that Talbot is an agent of the French Government—that he is over here to report on the condition of our party, and arrange for the rising?"

"Is it in earnest you are?" cried Lanty, with an expression of admirably dissembled astonishment. "Are you telling me truth, Master Mark."

"Yes, and more still—the day is not far distant now, when we shall strike the blow."

"I want you here, my worthy friend," said the constable, putting his head into the room, and touching Lanty's shoulder. The horsedealer looked confused, and for a second seemed undetermined how to act; but suddenly recovering his composure, he smiled significantly at Mark, wished him a good night, and departed.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE "DAYBREAK ON THE STRAND."

It was with an impatience almost amounting to madness that Mark O'Donoghue awaited the dawn of day; long before that hour had arrived he had made every preparation for joining his friend. A horse stood ready saddled awaiting him in the stable, and his pistols—the weapons Talbot knew so well how to handle—were carefully packed in the heavy holsters. The time settled for the meeting was seven o'clock, but he was certain that Talbot would be near the place before that hour, if not already there. The scene which followed Talbot's escape also stimulated his anxiety to meet with him; not that any, even the faintest suspicion of his friend's honour ever crossed Mark's mind, but he wished to warn him of the dangers that were gathering around him, for were he arrested on a suspicion, who was to say what material evidence might not arise against him in his real character of a French spy. Mark's was not a character long to brood over doubtful circumstances, and seek an explanation for difficulties which only assumed the guise of suspicions. Too prone always to be led by first impressions of every body and every thing, he hated and avoided whatever should

disturb the opinions he thus hastily formed. When matters too complicated and knotty for his immediate comprehension crossed him, he turned from them without an effort, and rather satisfied himself that it was a point of honour to "go on believing," than harbour a doubt even where the circumstances were calculated to suggest it. This frame of mind saved him from all uneasiness on the score of Talbot's honour; he had often heard how many disguises and masks his friend had worn in the events of his wild and dangerous career, and if he felt how incapable he himself would have been to play so many different parts, the same reason prevented his questioning the necessity of such subterfuges. That Harry Talbot had personated any or all of the persons mentioned by the constable, he little doubted, and therefore he regarded their warrant after him as only another evidence of his skill and cleverness, but that his character were in the least involved, was a supposition that never once occurred to him. Amid all his anxieties of that weary night, not one arose from this cause; no secret distrust of his friend lurked in any corner of his heart; his fear was solely for Talbot's safety, and for what he probably ranked as highly—the certainty of his keeping his appointment with Frederick Travers; and what a world of conflicting feelings were here! At one moment a sense of savage, unrelenting hatred to the man who had grossly insulted himself, at the next a dreadful thrill of agony that this same Travers might be the object of his cousin's love, and that on *his* fate, *her* whole happiness in life depended. Had the meeting been between himself and Travers—had the time come round to settle that old score of insult that lay between them, he thought that such feelings as these would have been merged in the gratified sense of vengeance, but now, how should he look on, and see him fall by another's pistol?—how see another expose his life in the place he felt to be his own? He could not forgive Talbot for this, and every painful thought the whole event suggested, embittered him against his friend as the cause of his suffering. And yet, was it possible for him ever himself to have challenged Travers? Did not the discovery of Kate's secret, as he called it to her, on the road below the cliff, at once and for ever, prevent such a catastrophe? Such were some of the harassing reflections which distracted Mark's mind, and to which his own wayward temper and natural excitability gave additional poignancy; while jealousy, a passion that fed and ministered to his hate, lived through every sentiment and tinctured every thought. Such had been his waking and sleeping thoughts for many a day—thoughts which, though lurking, like a slow poison, within him, had never become so palpable to his mind before; his very patriotism, the

attachment he thought he felt to his native country, his ardent desire for liberty, his aspirations for national greatness, all sprung from this one sentiment of hate to the Saxon, and jealousy of the man who was his rival. Frederick Travers was the embodiment of all those feelings he himself believed were enlisted in the cause of his country.

As these reflections crowded on him, they suggested new sources of suffering, and in the bewildered frame of mind to which he was now reduced, there seemed no possible issue to his difficulties. Mark was not, however, one of those who chalk out their line in life in moments of quiet reflection, and then pursue the career they have fixed upon. His course was rather to throw passion and impulse into the same scale with circumstances, and take his chance of the result. He had little power of anticipation, nor was his a mind that could calmly array facts before it, and draw the inferences from them. No, he met the dangers of life, as he would have done those of battle, with a heart undaunted, and a spirit resolved never to turn back. The sullen courage of his nature, if it did not suggest hope, at least supplied resolution—and how many go through life with no other star to guide them!

At last the grey dawn of breaking day appeared above the house-tops, and the low distant sounds that prelude the movement of life in great cities, stirred faintly without.

"Thank heaven, the night is over at last," was Mark's exclamation, as he gazed upon the leaden streak of cloud that told of morning.

All his preparations for departure were made, so that he had only to descend to the stable, and mount his horse. The animal, he was told, had formerly belonged to Talbot, and nothing save the especial favour of Billy Crossley could have procured him so admirable a mount.

"He has never left the stable, sir," said Billy, as he held the stirrup himself—"he has never left the stable for ten days, but he has wind enough to carry you two and twenty miles within the hour, if you were put to it."

"And if I were, Billy," said Mark, for a sudden thought just flashed across him—"if I were, and if I should not bring him back to you, his price is—

"I wouldn't take a hundred guineas for him from any man living, save Mr. Talbot himself; but if it were a question of saving him from danger, or any man he deems his friend, then, then, sir, I tell you fairly, Billy Crossley isn't so poor a man, but he can afford to do a generous thing. Take him. I see you know how to sit on him; use him well and tenderly, keep him until you find the time to give him back, and now a good journey to you wherever you go; and go quickly, whispered

Billy, for I see two fellows at the gate who appear listening attentively to our conversation.

"Take that in any case as a pledge," said Mark, as he pitched a purse, containing above a hundred pounds in gold, towards Crossley, and before the other could interpose to restore it, Mark had dashed his spurs into the beast's flanks, and in another minute was hastening down Thomas-street.

Mark had not proceeded far when he slackened his pace to a walk—he remembered that it was yet two hours before the time, and with the old spirit of a horseman, he husbanded the qualities of the noble animal he bestrode. Whether it was, that as the moment approached which should solve some of the many difficulties that beset him, or that the free air of the morning, and the pleasure he felt on being once more in the saddle, had rallied his mind and raised his courage, I know not, but so it was; Mark's spirits grew each instant lighter, and he rode along revolving other ones, if not happier thoughts, such as were at least in a frame more befitting his youth and the bold heart that beat within his bosom. The streets were deserted, the great city was sleeping, the thoroughfares he had seen crowded with brilliant equipages and hurrying masses of foot passengers, were still and vacant; and as Mark turned from side to side to gaze on the stately public edifices now sleeping in their own shadows, he thought of the dreadful conflict which, perchance, it might be his own lot to lead in that same city—he thought of the wild shout of the insurgent masses, as with long-pent-up, but now loosened fury they poured into the devoted streets—he fancied the swelling clangour which denoted the approach of troops, ringing through the various approaches, and the clattering sounds of distant musketry as post after post in different parts of the town was assailed. He halted before the Castle gate, where a single dragoon sat motionless in his saddle, his carbine at rest beneath his long cloak, the very emblem of peaceful security, and as Mark gazed on him, his lip curled with an insolent sneer as he thought over the false security of those within; and that proud banner whose lazy folds scarce moved with the breath of morning, "How soon may we see a national flag replace it?"—were the words he muttered, as he resumed his way as slowly as before. A few minutes after brought him in front of the College. All was still silent in that vast area, along which at noon-day the wealth and the life of the city poured. A single figure here appeared, a poor miserable object in tattered black, who was occupied in affixing a placard on the front of the Post-office. Mark stopped to watch him—there seemed something sad and miserable in the lot of this one poor creature, singled out as it

were to labour while others were sunk in sleep. He drew near, and as the paper was unfolded before him, read, in large letters, the words "Capital Felony—£500 Reward"—and then followed a description of John Barrington, which in every particular of height, age, look, and gesture, seemed perfectly applicable to Talbot.

"Then, sorra one of me but would rather be tearing you down than putting you up," said the bill-sticker, as with his arms folded leisurely on his breast, and his ragged hat set sideways on his head, he apostrophized his handiwork.

"And why so, my good fellow," said Mark, replying to the words. He turned round rapidly, and pulling off his hat, exclaimed, in an accent of unfeigned delight—"Tear-an-ages, captain, is it yourself? Och! och! no," added he, in a tone of as great despondency—"it is the black horse that deceived me. I beg your honor's pardon."

"And you know this horse," said Mark, with some anxiety of manner.

The bill-sticker made no answer, but carefully surveyed Mark, for a few moments from head to foot, and then, as if not perfectly satisfied with the result of his scrutiny, he slowly resumed the implements of his trade, and prepared to move on.

"Stop a moment," said Mark, "I know what you mean, this horse belonged to ——" and he pointed with his whip to the name on the placard. Don't be afraid of me, then, for I am his friend, perhaps the nearest friend he has in the world."

"Av you were his brother, you don't like him better than I do myself. I'll never forget the night he got his head laid open for me on the bridge there beyant. The polis wanted to take me up for a bit of a ballad I was singing about Major Sirr, and they were hauling me along through the gutter, and kicking me at every step, when up comes the captain, and he sent one flying here, and the other flying there, and he tripped up the chief, calling out to me the whole time, 'Run for it, Dinny—run for it like a man; I'll give you five minutes fair start of them any way.' And he kept his word, though one of them cut his forehead clean down to the bone; and here I am now sticking up a reward to take him, God pardon me"—and the poor fellow uttered the last words in a voice of self-reproach, that actually brought the tears into his eyes.

Mark threw him a crown, and pressed on once more; but somehow the convictions which resisted, before, were now shaken by this chance meeting. The recognition of the horse at once identified Talbot with Barrington, and although Mark rejected altogether any thought which

impugned the honour of his friend, he felt obliged to believe that, for some object of intrigue, Talbot had assumed the name and character of this celebrated personage. The very fact of his rescuing the bill-sticker strengthened this impression. Such an act seemed to Mark far more in unison with the wayward recklessness of Talbot's character, than with the bearing of a man who might thus expose himself to capture. With the subtlety which the will supplies to furnish arguments for its own conviction, Mark fancied how readily Talbot might have made this personation of Barrington a master-stroke of policy, and while thus he ruminated, he reached the sea shore, and could see before him that long bleak track of sand, which, uncovered save at high tide, is called "the Bull." This was the spot appointed for the meeting, and, although now within half an hour of the time, no figure was seen upon its bleak surface. Mark rode on, and crossing the narrow channel of water which separates "the Bull" from the main-land, reached the place over which, for above two miles in extent, his eye could range freely. Still no one was to be seen; the light ripple of the ebbing tide was the only sound in the stillness of the morning; there was a calmness over the surface of the sea, on which the morning sunbeams were slanting faintly, and glittering like freckled gold, wherever some passing breeze or shore-current stirred the waters. One solitary vessel could be seen, and she, a small schooner, with all her canvas bent, seemed scarcely to move.

Mark watched her, as one watches any object which relieves the dreariness of waiting, he gazed on her tall spars and white sails reflected in the sea, when suddenly a bright flash burst from her side, a light-blue smoke, followed by a booming sound, rolled forth, and a shot was seen skimming the surface of the water, for above a mile in her wake; the next moment a flag was run up to her peak, when it fluttered for a moment and was then lowered again. Mark's experience of a smuggling life taught him at once to recognize these signs as signals, and he turned his gaze towards the land to discover to whom they were made; but although for miles long the coast lay beneath his view, he could see nothing that corresponded with this suspicion. A single figure on horseback was all that he could detect, and he was too far off to observe minutely. Once more Mark turned towards the ship, which now was feeling a fresher breeze and beginning to bend beneath it. The white curl that broke from her bow, and rushed foaming along her sides, showed that she was making way through the water, not as it seemed without the will of those on board, for as the wind freshened they shook out their mainsail more fully, and continued at every moment to

spread sail after sail. The hollow tramp of a horse's feet galloping on the strand made Mark turn quickly round, and he saw the rider, whom he had observed before, bending his course directly towards him. Supposing it must be Talbot, Mark turned to meet him, and the horseman, who never slackened his speed, came quickly within view, and discovered the features of Frederick Travers. He was unaccompanied by friend or servant, and seemed, from the condition of his horse, to have ridden at the top of his speed. Before Mark could think of what apology he should make for, or how explain Talbot's absence, Travers addressed him——

"I half feared that it might not be you, Mr. O'Donoghue," said he, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow, for he seemed no less exhausted than his horse.

"I'm alone, sir," said Mark; "and were you not unaccompanied by a friend, I should feel the difficulty of my present position more severely."

"I know—I am aware," said Travers, hurriedly, "your friend is gone. I heard it but an hour since; you, in all likelihood, were not aware of the fact, till you saw the signal yonder."

"What!—Talbot's signal! Was that his?"

"Talbot, or Barrington," said Travers, smiling; "perhaps we should better call him by the name he is best known by."

"And do you concur in the silly notion that confounds Harry Talbot with a highwayman?" said Mark, sternly.

"I fear," said Travers, "that in doing so I but follow the impression of all the world. It was not the least clever thing he has ever done, his deception of you. Be assured, Mr. O'Donoghue, that the matter admits of no doubt. The warrant for his apprehension, the informations sworn against him, are not only plain and precise, but I have myself read certain facts of his intimacy with you, the places you have frequented, the objects for which, it is alleged, you were confederated—all these are at this moment in the hands of the Secretary of State. Forgive me, sir, if I tell you that you appear to have trusted too implicitly to men who were not guided by your own principles of honour. This very day a warrant for your own arrest will be issued from the Privy Council, on the information of a man whom, I believe, you never suspected. He is a horsedealer named Lawler—Lanty Lawler."

"And he has sworn informations against me?"

"He has done more; he has produced letters written by your hand,

and addressed to different leaders of the United Irish party, letters whose treasonable contents do not admit of a doubt.

"And the scoundrel has my letters?" said Mark, as his face grew purple with passion.

"He has them no longer," said Travers. "Here they are, sir. They were shown in confidence to my father, by one, who certainly is not your friend. Sir Marmaduke asked permission to let me see them, and I have taken on myself, without permission, to give them back to you."

"At whose suggestion," said Mark, proudly, "comes this act of grace? Is it your father, who extends his protection to a tenant, or is it yourself, whose wish is to humble me by an obligation?"

"There is none," said Travers, frankly. "I believe, that scoundrels without heart or courage have laid a trap for a man who has both one and the other. I do not desire you should accept my conduct as a favour, still less as offering any bar to such a reckoning between us as two gentleman of equal place and standing may demand or expect from one another."

"Say you so, indeed!" cried Mark, as his eyes flashed with joy: "is that your meaning?"

"There's my hand on it," said Travers, "as friend or foe!"

Mark grasped his hand, and wrung it with a convulsive pressure.

"Then you are aware that you owe me such a reparation," said he, in a voice tremulous with emotion. "You do not forget the day at Carrig-na-curra—beside the hearth—before my brother?"

"I remember it well," said Travers. "I ask your pardon for the insult. It was unworthy of me to have made the speech, nor have I been on good terms with myself since I uttered it."

Mark dropped his head, and uttered not a word. He could better have looked on Travers wounded and bleeding than have seen him thus elevated above himself by temper and manly candour. The vengeance he had yearned after so long was not only snatched from his grasp, but in the bitterness of disappointment its sting was turned against himself.

"This would be an unworthy cause of quarrel," said Travers; "one of which I could not but feel ashamed, and wherein you could have no pride. If we are not to be friends—and I seek no man's friendship who is not as willing to accept of mine—if we are not to be friends, let our enmity be ratified on some better cause—we surely can have little difficulty in finding one."

Mark nodded assentingly, and Travers resumed—

"There is something still more pressing than this. My father will

be able to defer the issue of the warrant against you for three days, when the Privy Council will again be summoned together. Until that time you are safe. Make good use of it, therefore. Leave the capital —reach some place of security; and, after some time, when the excitement of the affair has passed away——"

"By a due expression of sorrow and penitence, I might be fortunate enough to obtain the King's pardon. You were about to say so much. Is't not so?"

"Not exactly," said Frederick, smiling; "but now that the Government are in possession of the secret details of this plot, and thoroughly aware of the men engaged in it, and what their objects are, to persist in it, would be hopeless folly. Believe me, the chances were never in your favour, and at present you have not a single one left. For your sake, Mr. O'Donoghue, this is most fortunate. The courage that would seem madness in a hopeless cause, will win you fame and honour where the prospects are fairer. There is a new world beyond the seas, where men of hardy minds and enterprising spirits achieve rank and fortune—in India, where war has all the features of chivalry, where personal daring and heroism are surer roads to distinction than influence and patronage; no prize will be too high for your aspirations."

Mark was silent, and Travers conjecturing that his words were sinking into his heart with a persuasive power, went on to repicture the adventurous life which should open to him, if he would consent to leave his country, and seek fortune beyond the seas. As he continued to speak, they rode along side by side, and at last came to that part of the shore, where a road branched off. Here Mark suddenly drew up, and said—

"I must say good-bye here, Mr. Travers. My path will lie this way for the present. Do not suspect me of want of feeling because I have not thanked you for the part you have taken; but in truth you have averted the evil from one whose life has nothing worth living for. You have saved me from a danger, but I am without a hope. Betrayed and cheated by those I trusted, I have little care for the future, because I have no confidence in any thing. Nay, nay—don't speak of that again. I will not go to India—I will not accept of favours from a country that has been the enemy of my own. The epaulette which *you* wear with honour, would be a badge of disgrace upon *my* shoulder. Good-bye, I can afford to thank you, because you have not made a service take the form of an 'amende.'"

Travers forbore to press him further. He wisely judged that enough had been done for the present, and that his safety being provided for,

time and opportunity would both present themselves for the remainder. He shook his proffered hand with cordiality, and they separated, Frederick to return to Dublin, Mark to wander wherever chance might incline him.

"He said truly," exclaimed Mark, as soon as he once more found himself separated from his companion—"he said truly, the chances were never in our favour, and at present we have not a single one left. The cause which depends on such elements as these is worse than hopeless." Such were the words that broke from him, as, in sorrow and humiliation, he remembered the character of his associates, and felt, in deep shame, the companionship he had fallen into. "Had there been but one true to me!" exclaimed he, in accents of misery, "I could have stood against the shock, stout hearted; but to find all false—all!"

Seeking out some of the least frequented lanes, he rode on for several miles, caring little which way, so long as he turned from the capital;—for although as yet no personal danger threatened him, a nervous sense of shame made him dread the sight of his former acquaintances. Again and again did the thought recur to him: "How will Kate hear me spoken of? In what light will my actions be displayed to her? Is it as the miserable dupe of such a wretch as Lawler, or is it as the friend and chosen companion of Barrington, I would be known? And yet, what have I to fear, to whom no hope is left!"

Among the many sources of his sorrow, one recurred at every moment, and mingled itself with every other thought: "What would their noble-hearted friends in France say of them?—how would they speak of a land whose struggle for freedom is stained with treachery, or which cannot number in the ranks of its defenders but the felon or the outlaw?"

For the deceit practised on the people he felt bitterly. He knew with what devotedness they followed the cause—the privations they had borne in silence, awaiting the time of retribution—how they had forborne all ebullitions of momentary passion, in expectation of the day of a greater reckoning—with what trust they obeyed their leaders—how implicitly they confided in every direction given for their guidance. Can patriotism like this survive such a trial? Will they ever believe in the words of their chief again?—were questions which his heart answered despondingly.

The day wore over in these sad musings, and by evening, Mark, who had made a wide circuit of the country, arrived at the village of Lucan, where he passed the night. As day was breaking, he was again on the road, directing his steps towards Wicklow, where in the wild district near Blessington, he had acquaintance with several farmers, all sincerely

devoted to the "United party." It was as much to rescue his own character from any false imputations that might be cast on it, as from any hope of learning favourable tidings, that he turned hither. The mountain country, too, promised security for the present, and left him time to think what course he should follow.

Mark did not miscalculate the good feeling of the people in this quarter. No success, however triumphant, would have made him one half so popular as his disasters had done. That he had been betrayed, was an appeal stronger than all others to their best affections; and had the deliverance of Ireland depended on his safety, there could not have been greater efforts to provide for it, nor more heartfelt solicitude for his own comfort. He found, too, that the treachery of individuals did not shake general confidence in the success of the plot, so much hope had they of French assistance and co-operation. These expectations were often exaggerated, because the victories of the French armies had been represented as triumphs against which no opposition availed; but they served to keep up national courage; and the theme of all their discourses and their ballads was the same: "The French will do us right."

If Mark did not fully concur in the expectations so confidently formed, he was equally far from feeling disposed to throw any damper on them; and at length, as by daily intercourse these hopes became familiarized to his mind, he ended by a partial belief in that future to which all still looked, undismayed by past reverses: and in this way time rolled on, and the embers of rebellion died not out, but smouldered.

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